



## Citizen Leadership in the Young Republic

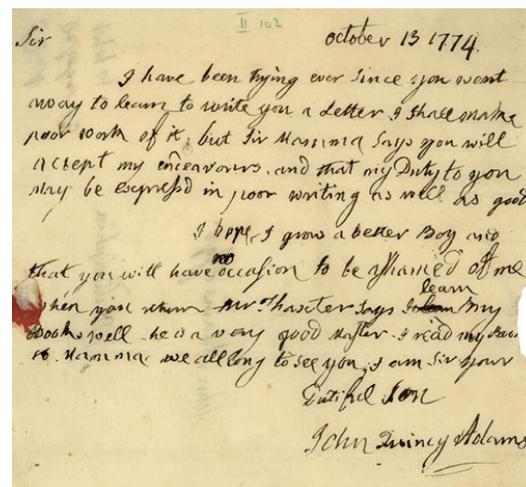
Advisor: Scott E. Casper, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Professor of History, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; National Humanities Center Fellow.

### Framing Question

What qualities of citizen leadership did John Adams consider essential to sustain and nurture the young republic? How do his letters to his growing son John Quincy reveal his point of view about the new nation?

### Understanding

In this study of the letters of John Adams and John Quincy Adams from 1774 to 1793, two central themes are highlighted — how Adams unfolded his “curriculum” for citizen leadership, and how his point of view changed from parent–teacher to mentor–guide as John Quincy entered the realm of American political life. To Adams, a citizen leader of the United States needed to exhibit upstanding moral character and self-discipline, acquire a solid foundation in classical learning, develop keen insight into the political dynamics of a democracy, and accept the challenges and sacrifices of public life. As his son grew from a child into a young man, John Adams fostered these qualities through the long-distance medium of letters.



John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 1774

### Text

[Correspondence of John Adams & John Quincy Adams, 1774–1793](#)

Find more selections from John Adams’s letters and diaries in [Becoming American](#) and [Making the Revolution](#) from the National Humanities Center and [Founders Online](#) from the National Archives.

### Text Type

Literary non-fiction: personal correspondence.

Tier 2 vocabulary words are defined in pop-ups (full list at bottom of page).

Tier 3 words are explained in brackets.

## Text Complexity

Grades 9–10 complexity band.

## Common Core Standards

[ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3](#) (how an author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events), and

[ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6](#) (point of view of two or more authors)

## Contextualizing Questions

1. What kind of text are we dealing with?
2. When was it written?
3. Who wrote it?
4. For what audience was it intended?
5. For what purpose was it written?

## Background

John Adams and John Quincy Adams were the nation’s first father–son presidents (the second being George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush). John Adams served as the second president from 1797 to 1801, and John Quincy Adams took office twenty-four years later as the sixth president, from 1825 to 1829. At age 89, John Adams was thrilled with his son’s election, writing him that “Never did I feel so much solemnity as upon this occasion. The multitude of my thoughts, and the intensity of my feelings are too much for a mind like mine, in its ninetieth year.” [February 18, 1825]

John Adams’s concept of citizen leader was shaped by his experiences in the Continental Congress and as a U.S. diplomat to European countries during and after the Revolution. He understood that the new nation needed a new type of citizen leader — one that championed the revolutionary ideals of liberty and democracy while understanding the young nation’s vulnerability to political divisiveness, inexperience, and isolation. With this in mind, Adams set out to nurture his sons, especially firstborn John Quincy, as citizen leaders who would take the nation securely into the nineteenth century. This goal reflects John Adams’s oft-quoted statement of his duty as a father and Founding Father: “I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Painting and Poetry, Mathematicks and Philosophy. My sons ought to study Mathematicks and Philosophy, Geography, Natural History, Naval Architecture, Navigation, Commerce and Agriculture, in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry and Porcelaine.” [letter to Abigail Adams, May 12, 1780]

When young John Quincy was seven years old, John Adams left their Massachusetts home to serve as a delegate to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Little did they know that the Adams family would rarely live together again as Adams served a long civic career in America and Europe.

These selections from the father–son letters follow John Adams’s long-distance guidance of his son’s upbringing. From the outset, Adams stressed moral character and the value of classical learning (Greek and Roman classics). The goal of education, he wrote to thirteen-year-old John Quincy, is “to make you a good Man and a useful Citizen. This will ever be the Sum total of the Advice of your affectionate Father.” After John Quincy completed his formal education and began his adult life as a young lawyer, his father guided his entry into the turbulent world of politics, stressing that “the true interest and honor of your Country should be your only Object.”



*John Quincy Adams (left) and John Adams, 1783*

The letters in this lesson span twenty years, from 1774 to 1793, and follow John Adams from age 38 to 58 and John Quincy from age seven to 26. They focus on three phases in John Quincy's maturation:

- ages 7–10, as a child at home with his mother and siblings during the Revolutionary War.
- ages 12–18, as a student in Europe and America, often separated from his family.
- ages 23–26, as a Harvard graduate and a lawyer beginning his practice in Boston.

Soon after the course of these letters, John Quincy Adams began his lifetime career as a citizen leader, serving as a U.S. diplomat to the Netherlands, Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain (UK); and as a U.S. Senator, Secretary of State, and as the sixth president of the United States (1825–1829). After his presidency, he represented his Massachusetts district in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1831 until his death in 1848.



*John Quincy Adams, 1796*

Underlined words are defined in the Glossary at the end of this document.

## Teaching the Text

This lesson contains six elements:

- The [Adams-Adams letters](#) in a PDF .
- A [graphic organizer](#)  and a [completed graphic organizer](#)  with suggested entries is provided.
- A close reading section (**Text Analysis**) of three selections from the letters.
- Two interactive modules, indicated by this icon: .
- A [student version](#) of the lesson as a PDF , a printable worksheet that can be completed online.
- A [follow-up assignment](#) .

Become familiar with the letters before beginning a close analysis. Have students read them aloud — with overdramatic emphasis, perhaps — to accommodate to the eighteenth-century language, to situate themselves in the father-son relationship, and to sense the writers' intentions and feelings behind the words. Imagine growing up as John Quincy: you come to realize how important your father is to the country as it breaks from Britain, wins its independence, and inaugurates its nationhood. You also come to realize that your father is preparing to pass the torch on to you and your generation. Use the [graphic organizer](#)  to chart John Adams's guidance in preparing his son as a future citizen leader of the young republic. (A [completed graphic organizer](#)  with suggested entries is provided.)

Also have students consider how private correspondence differs from works written for the public. How do these differences affect the study of letters as historical documents? What insights can be gained about the creation of the United States from the private letters of the Founding Fathers? With the overarching questions below, guide your students in discussing the letters as a whole. (Close reading questions are in the **Text Analysis** section.)

- During each stage of John Quincy's maturation (childhood, adolescence, young adulthood), characterize the interchange between him and his father in their letters. What's happening in their letters?

- What “sentiments” (emotions) do they reveal in their letters?
- How does their father–son relationship change over the years?
- At what point does John Quincy begin to comment on the social and political realities around him? What does he find important to describe to his father?
- How does he evaluate social and political life in Europe, at Harvard, and later in Boston?
- Select letters that mark the four transitions below. Point out specific elements in the letters that indicate the changes. (You might or might not choose four separate letters.) Do items B and C mark the same transition?
  - A. John Adams stops addressing his son as a child.
  - B. John Quincy Adams starts addressing his father as a fellow adult.
  - C. The father–son correspondence reflects a peer-to-peer relationship.
  - D. John Adams states his goal of preparing his son to be a citizen leader.
- What aspects of moral character does John Adams emphasize in his letters? What habits of a healthy and useful life? For Adams, who is a “good Man”?
- For Adams, what constitutes a “useful Citizen,” especially in a republic? Cite specific comments in Adams’s letters.
- How will education make John Quincy “a good Man and a useful Citizen”? Specifically, how will classical learning (the Greek and Roman classics) train John Quincy’s mind?
- What does Adams recommend for his son’s personal happiness? What happiness has Adams lost in his civic career? What has he gained?
- What does Adams want his son to learn about a life of civic duty to one’s country? What ideals does he value?
- What does he want him to learn about politics — the nitty-gritty in which a citizen leader must function?
- Does he think John Quincy can rise to the challenge? What evidence leads you to your answer?
- How do his letters to John Quincy reveal his point of view about the young republic?
- Put it all together. What qualities of a citizen leader did John Adams consider essential to sustain and nurture the young republic? How did he foster these qualities in his son John Quincy Adams?

## Text Analysis

### John Quincy Adams (age 9) to John Adams (age 41)

June 2, 1777

Dear Sir,

I Love to receive Letters very well, much better than I love to write them. I make but a poor figure at Composition; my head is much too fickle, my Thoughts are running after birds’ eggs, play, and trifles, till I get vexed with myself. Mamma has a troublesome task to keep me Steady, and I own [admit] I am ashamed of myself.... I wish, sir, you would give me Some instructions with regard to my time and advise me how to proportion [schedule] my Studies and my Play, in writing, and I will keep them by me and endeavour to follow them.... John Quincy Adams

## Activity: Understanding the Adams Letters

This activity helps students summarize the letter excerpts in this section.



### How does nine-year-old John Quincy present himself to his father? What is his point of view?

He presents himself as an immature penitent son requesting guidance from his father, whom he has not seen in six months. [John Adams had left home the previous January to attend the Continental Congress.] However, we can question how much this was John Quincy's personal viewpoint.

### What can we infer about the influence of John Quincy's mother, Abigail Adams, in the writing of his letter? Cite evidence from the letter.

While a young boy might express shame and self-admonishment in a letter to his father, his language and his request for "some instructions" suggest that his mother prompted him in composing the letter (but we can't know for certain). The phrase "my thoughts are running after birds' eggs, play, and trifles" suggests a mother's exasperation, not a child's self-description.

### What can we hypothesize about her goals for her children's communication with their father?

Because Abigail knew that her four children (John Quincy, Abigail, Susanna, and Charles) might have an absent father for many years, perhaps she was trying to initiate long-distance fatherly guidance through letters. This goal is suggested in John Quincy's chastising himself for being playful and impulsive rather than serious and studious.

## John Adams (age 41) to John Quincy Adams (age 10)

July 27, 1777

My dear Son,

If it should be the Design of Providence [will of God] that you should live to grow up, you will naturally feel a Curiosity to learn the History of the Causes which have produced the late [recent/ongoing] Revolution of our Government. No Study in which you can engage will be more worthy of you. It will become [benefit] you to make yourself Master of [become well informed about] all the considerable Characters [people] which have figured upon the Stage of civil, political or military Life. This you ought to do with the Utmost Candor, Benevolence, and Impartiality, and if you should now and then meet with an Incident which shall throw some Light upon your Father's Character, I charge you to consider it with an Attention only to Truth. You will wonder, my dear son, at my writing to you at your tender [young] Age such dry Things as these, but if you keep this Letter you will in some future Period thank your Father for writing it.... John Adams

### How does John Adams present himself to his young son? What is his point of view? Cite evidence from the letter.

One can speculate that Adams already views himself as a leader of the Revolution — and his son as a child of the Revolution. His reply to John Quincy's request for "instructions" is to direct him to learn all he can about the Revolution and its leaders. Adams adds a personal caution to his son: to search for the truth in any criticism he may read about his father.

### What is the time span between John Quincy's letter and his father's reply? How far did the letter have to travel?

About eight weeks; about 320 miles from Braintree to Philadelphia.

**How does Adams’s tone change at the end of the letter? Cite evidence from the letter.**

Adams’s tone changes from a teacher’s directive to a father’s sentiment. He seems to apologize to his young son for inserting harsh reality into their relationship (“You will wonder, my dear son”; “at your tender age”). He admits that John Quincy may not understand the importance of his guidance until later (“such dry Things as these”; “you will in some future Period thank your Father”). The last sentence suggests a heartfelt sadness that the times require such advice for a young innocent boy.

**John Adams (age 41) to John Quincy Adams (age 10)**

**August 11, 1777**

My dear Son,

As the War in which your Country is engaged will probably hereafter attract your Attention more than it does at this Time, and as the future Circumstances of your Country may require other Wars, as well as Councils and Negotiations, similar to those which are now in Agitation, I wish to turn your Thoughts early to such Studies, as will afford you the most solid Instruction and Improvement for the Part which may be allotted you to act on the Stage of Life....

John Adams

**What evidence does this letter offer to suggest that Adams sees his son as a future citizen leader?**

Adams practically announces to his son that his future will likely be as a citizen leader “of your Country” (if it wins its independence, of course). Someday you will be in my place, he implies, and you must begin to prepare yourself for the role “which may be allotted you to act on the Stage of Life.” John Quincy is ten years old when he receives this letter.

**John Adams (age 54) to John Quincy Adams (age 23)**

**before September 8, 1790**

Dear Sir...

If you meddle with political subjects, let me Advise you to never lose sight of Decorum. Assume a Dignity above all Personal Reflections: and avoid as much as possible a Party [partisan] Spirit. The true Interest and honor of your Country should be your only Object. And may you be a Terror to those evil Doers to whom Truth and Falsehood are equally but sport, honor but a Phantom [illusion], and their own insignificant importance their only objects....

John Adams

**How has John Adams’s point of view changed since 1777, now that he is Vice President of the United States and his son, a Harvard graduate, is setting up a law practice in Boston?**

He acts more like a mentor and role model than a teacher or parent. He gives guidance as advice, not as directive (“if you meddle”; “let me advise you”; “may you be a Terror”; “Have you ever attended?”). His salutation is “Dear sir” or “Dear John,” not “My dear son.” John Quincy had just completed a three-year law apprenticeship and now his father—the vice president of the United States, no less—is inaugurating John Quincy’s entry into the world of politics and civic duty.

**To this point, how had John Adams unfolded his “curriculum” to prepare his son for citizen leadership?**

(Consult the [graphic organizer](#) .) In John Quincy’s childhood and teenaged years, John Adams stressed moral character, self-discipline, study of the American Revolution and its causes, and a strong educational foundation. He offered general guidance about civic leadership, e.g., act with respect for all, avoid political divisiveness, and put the nation’s welfare ahead of your personal interests.

## John Adams (age 54) to John Quincy Adams (age 23)

September 13, 1790

Dear John,

I wrote you before today: but I forgot to say Several Things. Have you ever attended a Town Meeting? You may there learn the Ways of Men, and penetrate Several Characters [gain insight into specific political leaders and how they exercise power] which otherwise You would not know. There are Several Objects of Enquiry which I would point out to your consideration without making any noise or parade about them.

1. The State of Parties [factions, interest groups, political parties] in Religion, Government Manners, Fashions.
2. The Leading Characters in Church and State.
3. The Machines [mechanisms], Arts and Channels by which Intelligence [news] and Reports are circulated through the Town [i.e., news media and modes of verbal news exchange]
4. The Makers and Spreaders of Characters [e.g., political mentors, power brokers, pundits and opinion makers, determiners of reputations]
5. The State of the various Tradesmen and Mechanics, their Views, designs [goals], and Projects
6. The State, Hopes, Views, Plans, Passions, and Sentiments of the old Tories [Loyalists], and their Correspondencies abroad [overseas] and at home in their own State and in other States.
7. Ditto of the old Whigs of 1764 and 1774 [Patriots who led the Massachusetts opposition to the Stamp Act of 1764 and the Coercive Acts of 1775, after the Boston Tea Party]
8. Ditto of the Neutrals.
9. Ditto of those who have Sprung up Since the Revolution.
10. The Characters [leaders and their reputations] of all the Clergymen of all denominations, Physicians, surgeons, Apothecaries [pharmacists], Lawyers, and Merchants of Eminence [influential businessmen] & shopkeepers.
11. The Foreigners in or out of offices, French, English, Dutch, etc.
12. The Various Combinations of all these.
13. The State of Diversions, Amusements, Spectacles, etc.
14. The various Clubs, Lists [of members] of all which you should obtain.
15. The Buffoons, the Merry Andrews [public clowns], the story tellers, the song Singers, the Mimics.

These are all Wheels, Springs, Cogs, or Pins, Some of them dirty ones which compose the [social-political] Machine and make it go.... Write me as often as possible. Don't show my Letters. J. A.

### In these letters of 1790, what new guidance does Adams offer his son?

Adams encourages his son to study the American political process in action.

- He urges him to get out into the nitty-gritty of politics: attend political meetings and observe astutely the environment in which you will act as a citizen leader.
- He expands the realm in which a civic leader must act, e.g., not only should you put your country first, you should counteract the harm done by those who put their selfish political goals first.
- He directs John Quincy's attention to the dark side of political life, which a player must understand — "the Wheels, Springs, Cogs, or Pins, Some of them dirty ones which compose the [social-political] Machine."

**Which statement below best describes the list of fifteen "objects of inquiry" that John Adams urges his son to study in a Boston town meeting? Explain your answer.**

- A. The list encompasses the social-political dynamics in northern and middle Atlantic cities at the time.**
- B. The list identifies the political parties in America since independence, and their major principles.**
- C. The list reflects Adams’s broad civic career in the United States and Europe.**

**A** is correct. **B** is incorrect because the list includes factors beyond political groups, e.g., the media, business and religious leaders, and those with no political influence. **C** is incorrect because the list does not address foreign affairs, in which Adams had years of experience as a U.S. diplomat in Europe.

**Consider John Adams’s machine metaphor — “the Wheels, Springs, Cogs, or Pins, Some of them dirty ones which compose the Machine.” Why is this metaphor a suitable choice for the political dynamics Adams wants his son to observe?**

A machine, whether mechanical or political:

- has many moving parts that must function together to make an effective tool or mechanism
- must be maintained and well oiled according to a procedure understood by those who use it
- requires training and experience of those who use, modify, and manipulate it
- is designed (or evolves) to function semi-independently, without constant supervision of a mechanic
- includes parts that, due to their function or placement, become more greasy and “dirty” than others
- is vulnerable, due to its complexity, to breakdowns, misuse, sabotage, and obsolescence.

**How does John Adams differentiate between the elements of the political machine that are “dirty ones” and those that are not?**

He doesn’t. Thus he implies that shady and unethical political practices may be found in all fifteen elements.

**Why might Adams have urged John Quincy to observe the town meeting “without making any noise or parade,” and why might he have closed with “don’t show my Letters”?**

As Vice President of the United States, and as a longtime survivor of harsh partisan criticism, John Adams would not want his frank description of social-political roles in America to be publicly known. Nor would he want John Quincy faulted for ulterior motives in attending the town meeting. But Adams knew that it would be an essential lesson in his son’s preparation for a civic career.

**John Quincy Adams (age 23) to John Adams (age 54)**

**October 19, 1790**

Dear Sir...

I have attended a Town-meeting, Sir, and it was upon the occasion of the choice of [congressional] Representative for the district. I was indeed not a little diverted [amused] at the scene and derived I believe some little Instruction as well as Entertainment from it. Three fourths of the Votes in this Town were indeed for Mr: Ames, and this perhaps may enable you to form an opinion respecting the popularity of the general [federal] Government in this State.... The real fact is that the new Government is very rapidly acquiring a broad and solid foundation of popularity. It possesses in my opinion the confidence of the people in this State to a more eminent degree than any other Government upon Earth can boast of: and it appears to me to have already acquired a stability as astonishing as the revolution it has produced in the face of our affairs. The effects of that revolution [i.e., the first government under the new constitution] are already felt in a very high degree in this part of the Country. Our Commerce is increasing and extending; our manufactures

multiplying very rapidly, our agriculture flourishing. Industry has resumed the place which it had resigned for some time to idleness [lack of activity] and luxury, and is seldom without employ. I am informed that the mechanics of almost every description in this Town are at present more constantly busy than they have been at any period since the Revolution.... The farmer, the tradesmen, the mechanic and the merchant, are all mutually so dependent upon one another for their prosperity, that I really know not whether most to pity the ignorance or to lament the absurdity of the partial [partisan] politicians, who are constantly erecting an imaginary wall of separation between them.... J. Q. Adams.

**What is John Quincy Adams’s point of view in reporting his observations from the town meeting?**

He responds as an astute observer rather than a naïve student answering questions posed by a teacher.

**How do his observations reveal a grown-up perspective and a maturing political eye?**

His observations extend beyond his father’s suggested “objects of enquiry” to capture a broad view of the state’s condition in 1790. He avoids a starstruck awe of Boston’s political celebrities. He strives to catch the subtleties of political power. He is analytical about the partisanship he observes, and he predicts future developments from his observations.

**At the same time, how do his observations reflect youthful enthusiasm and political inexperience?**

He almost gushes with optimism about the state’s progress and its response to the new federal government under Washington and Adams (“as astonishing as the revolution”; “in a very high degree”; “multiplying very rapidly”; “to a more eminent degree than any other Government upon Earth can boast of”). Even if his observations are accurate, John Quincy’s language is more exuberant than his father would use to describe the same phenomena.

**Has John Quincy followed his father’s “assignment” in reporting his observations at a town meeting?**

(You might choose to read the full letter.) Although John Quincy does not reply item by item through the fifteen “objects of enquiry,” he addresses the interplay among the elements of the social-political “Machine” — not only in the town meeting but in the state of Massachusetts as it adjusts to the new federal government under the Constitution. [Remember that he is writing to the Vice President of the United States.]

**John Quincy Adams (age 25) to John Adams (age 57)**

**December 16, 1792**

My dear Sir....

...There has been upon my mind a strong sentiment of delicacy [courtesy] which has kept me silent in the midst of all the scurrility of which you have been the object. The charges which private malice and public faction have employed as instruments [tools/weapons] against you have been so despicable in themselves that common sense and Common Honesty must have felt some degradation in descending to the refutation of them. I have thought that where they could have any possible effect, sober reason and plain truth could not counteract it, because the minds affected must be too blind or too wicked to feel the operation of just Sentiments [to be open to unbiased opinion].... J. Q. Adams.

**Which statement best summarizes the exchange between John Adams (Vice President of the United States) and John Quincy Adams (Boston lawyer) in these letters? Explain your answer.**

- A. They agree that newspapers should not be allowed to print partisan attacks on public officials.**
- B. They disagree about the extent of newspapers’ power to influence public opinion.**
- C. They disagree about the appropriate response to partisan attacks in the newspapers.**

**C** is correct. **A** would violate the First Amendment’s protection of the press (although Adams later supported the Sedition Act of 1798). **B** is incorrect because there is no evidence in John Quincy’s letter that his appraisal of newspapers’ power differed from his father’s.

**John Adams (age 57) to John Quincy Adams (age 25)  
December 26, 1792**

My dear Son...

Your Observations on the Scurrility disgorged [hurled] at me, as well as on the insidious Attacks on the general Government, are just [correct] to a certain degree, but not wholly so. The Newspapers guide and lead and form the public opinion.... We shall never have a fair Chance for a good Government until it is made a rule to let nothing pass unanswered. Reasoning must be answered by reasoning: Wit by Wit, Humor by Humor: Satire by Satire: Burlesque by Burlesque, and even Buffoonery by Buffoonery. The stupidity of Multitudes of good Friends of their Country and its Government is astonishing. They are carried away with every Wind of Doctrine and every political Lie, but the Docility with which they receive an answer when it is put into their Mouths is the only resource We have left. Hundreds even of the Officers of Government Stand aghast like Children not knowing what to think nor what to Say until another Gazette [newspaper] furnishes them with Matter.... J. A.

**Activity: Analyzing Tone in Nonfiction**

This activity analyzes John Adams’s tone in his letter about partisan attacks, public opinion, and the media.



**John Adams replies that John Quincy’s comments are accurate “to a certain degree, but not wholly so.” How does he agree and disagree with John Quincy’s appraisal?**

John Adams does not oppose his son’s statement that “sober reason and plain truth” are ineffective in changing the opinions of those who write and publish the “scurrility.” But he insists those who read the partisan attacks must discover immediate rebuttals in their newspapers. A public figure must make it “a rule to let nothing pass unanswered.”

**What is “the only resource we have left” to counter “scurrility,” according to John Adams?**

To take advantage of the public’s willingness to accept whatever appears in print. Rebuttals must be “put into [the] Mouths” of the docile public, which is “carried away with every Wind of Doctrine.”

**At what point in the letter does John Adams’s tone escalate in its intensity? Explain your answer.**

- A. Sentence 3: “We shall never have a fair Chance”**
- B. Sentence 4: “Reasoning must be answered”**
- C. Sentence 5: “The stupidity of Multitudes”**
- D. The letter maintains the same tone throughout.**

One can argue for **B** or **C**. Sentence 4 begins with the even-handed tone of the introductory sentences and becomes more vociferous after the colon. With Sentence 5, Adams exudes scorn and frustration with the “docility” of public opinion.

## Follow-Up Assignment

In this [follow-up assignment](#) , students read excerpts from John Quincy Adams's letter of condolence to his father in 1800 after John Adams was defeated for a second term as president of the United States (by Thomas Jefferson). In his remarks, John Quincy commended his father for exhibiting the qualities of citizen leadership that he had assiduously fostered in his son. Six traits of citizen leadership are listed on page one of the assignment. Students are directed to

- Identify one or more sentences in John Quincy's letter in which he honors that trait in his father. ANSWERS: 1–4, 11, 12; 2–9; 3–11, 12, 15; 4–5, 13, 14; 5–1; 6–4. [Students may select other suitable sentences.]
- Match the six traits with statements from John Adams's letters (1774–1793) in which he fostered the traits in his son. ANSWERS: 1–F, 2–D, 3–E, 4–B, 5–A, 6–C.

## Glossary

**benevolence:** good will, kindness, open-mindedness

**candor:** sincerity, openness, honesty

**decorum:** proper respectful behavior, civil conduct, manners

**docility:** readiness to yield to the wishes and opinions of others, submissiveness

**eminent:** high or great (in this usage)

**insidious:** sly, cunning, underhanded

**lament:** mourn, be saddened and discouraged by

**scurrility:** noun obsolete; current use of adjective scurrilous: abusive, vulgar, hateful, slanderous

**trifles:** trivial, unimportant things

**vexed:** annoyed, irritated

Text of Adams letters courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society, in *The Adams Family Papers* (MHS) and in *Founders Online* (National Archives).

Images:

- John Quincy Adams, letter to John Adams, October 13, 1774 (detail). Massachusetts Historical Society. Permission request submitted.
- Izaak Schmidt, portrait of John Quincy Adams, pastel on vellum, July 1783. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, NPG 91.3 / Art Resource, NY. Reproduced by permission.
- John Singleton Copley, portrait of John Adams, oil on canvas, 1783 (detail). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Harvard University Portrait Collection, Bequest of Ward Nicholas Boylston to Harvard College, 1828, H74. Photo: Imaging Department, President and Fellows of Harvard College. Reproduced by permission.
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